



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

July 2016 Newsletter



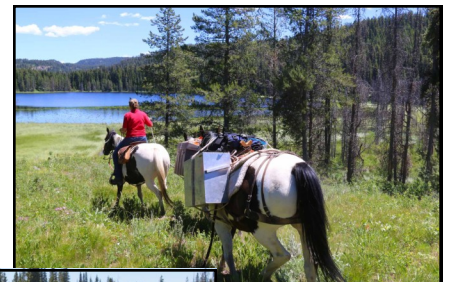
Horse Packing Fish

Fish managers in the Jackson Region are continuing the historic practice of stocking fish with horses with the annual stocking of Fish Lake just outside the southwest corner of Yellowstone National Park. Most, if not all, of Wyoming's backcountry lakes were originally stocked via horseback, but today they are nearly all stocked by helicopter as it is far more efficient.

The Jackson fish crew is still making the .6 mile trek into Fish Lake with horses, primarily because it is not really close to any of the other helicopter-stocked lakes in the region. Plus, if you ask Jackson Fish Biologist Diana Miller, she thinks it's kind of cool. "I enjoy working with the horses and I kind of like the idea of doing it the way the early fish managers did back in the day."



This year, approximately 2500 four-inch Snake River Cutthroats were hauled in. Fish lake also holds a thriving brook trout population that naturally reproduce on their own. Historically, smaller fish were stocked and managers found they had a hard time competing with the more aggressive, non-native brookies. Since going to the larger four-inch fish, managers are seeing better cutthroat survival in their sampling efforts. Brookies still outnumber the cutties, but both species are producing some nice fish in the lake, some upwards of 16-17 inches.





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Wyoming Harlequins Head West

In late May, Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla joined biologists from Environment Canada, the Biodiversity Research Institute and Grand Teton National Park to capture and mark two mated pairs of harlequins in Grand Teton National Park. The two males each received surgically implanted GPS transmitters to track their travels for the next two years. Each female harlequin was fitted with a geo-locator leg band that will provide less precise location data.

Recently, the males separately began their seasonal migration back to their wintering area. The map below shows the current progress of the two birds.

The females will

stay to raise their young and then will likely follow a similar migration route back to the Pacific Northwest.

Harlequins are one of the rarest breeding birds in the state, inhabiting swift water mountain streams of northwest Wyoming. This is the southeastern-most population in western North America.



Photos: (Above) Wildlife Veterinarian Malcolm McAdie evaluates a male harlequin duck after surgically implanting it with a GPS transmitter. (Right) A mated pair of harlequin ducks are released after being marked. (Below) A map showing the current migration path of the male harlequins.





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Warden Graham receives his award from Wildlife Division Chief Brian Nesvik at the recent Game and Fish Commission meeting in Pinedale.

Afton Warden Graham Honored, and Promoted

Afton Game Warden Todd Graham was recently honored with the prestigious Shikar Safari Wildlife Officer of the Year award and also was promoted to become the next Wildlife Supervisor for the Green River Region. The award, given annually in every state and Canadian province by the Shikar-Safari Club International, honors an officer whose efforts during the year display outstanding performance and achievement.

“Todd's exemplary service to our state's wildlife through his law enforcement efforts, wildlife management and public interactions earned him this tremendous honor. He is an extremely talented game warden

with tremendous respect from his co-workers and the public alike,” said Chief Game Warden Brian Nesvik.

Graham's recognition and recent promotion highlight his 24 years of dedication to the wildlife resources and people of Wyoming. His colleagues continuously noted his skills as an investigator as well as his pursuit of opportunities to educate the public on issues ranging from compliance with laws and regulations to the management of mule deer.

“Todd has the amazing ability to deal with a diverse and complex community in the Star Valley area. He is truly a professional in his ability to resolve wildlife conflicts without compromising his conviction to the wildlife resource. Todd's skill and abilities in dealing with wildlife damage is unsurpassed, and his efforts are recognized by his peers and the landowners he assists,” said Jackson Regional Wildlife Supervisor Brad Hovinga.

A hearty congratulations to Todd Graham for his accomplishments. Graham's Afton Warden District will be filled by James Hobbs, currently the Game Warden in Lovell.

Identifying Elk Calving Grounds

Jackson Game Warden Jordan Winter (below) assisted Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat (BFH) Biologist Ben Wise in locating and retrieving a Vaginal Implant Transmitter (VIT) in the upper Gros Ventre River drainage. Jackson and Pinedale BFH Biologists were busy finding VITs that they had implanted in pregnant cows earlier this past winter.

Since 2006, BFH Biologists have been capturing cow elk at various feedgrounds throughout the Jackson and Pinedale Regions and implanting pregnant cows. The transmitters are expelled when the calf is born or aborted. By identifying elk calving (parturition) areas, wildlife and livestock managers can work together to keep livestock and elk separate at this critical time of year to help reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle.





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Summer's Here, Fishing's Good

Wardens are reporting generally good fishing and good compliance in the Jackson area these days.

South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash and Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter did come across one angler with a size over limit on cutthroat (Left). On the Snake River, anglers can keep three cutthroats with only one over 12 inches in length.

Anglers enjoy a day fishing on Jenny Lake.



Funny Looking Owl

South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash and Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter followed up on a report of a Jackson resident having a funny looking owl. When asked, the individual readily admitted to having a Eurasian eagle owl they had brought from Texas. The individual was cited for illegal possession of wildlife. The owl was seized and taken care of at the Teton Raptor Center until a new home was found at an educational facility in Alabama, where it could be legally possessed. Warden Lash noted that the individual was very cooperative and even paid for the plane ticket to transport the owl to its new home.



Searching For CWD

Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch and North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens collect lymph nodes from a young cow elk to test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The elk was found dead and retrieved via horseback from the Bridger Teton National Forest north of Moran. Regional Game & Fish personnel have collected over 5800 CWD samples from elk, deer and moose since 1996. A moose from Star Valley turned up positive in 2008 and a sample from a mule deer came back positive this past winter, also from Star Valley. Regional personnel continue to collect samples during the hunting season and opportunistically throughout the year.



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Measuring Black Bear Densities

The Large Carnivore Section is excited to be evaluating a new method of noninvasive monitoring for black bears in the Greys River drainage of the Wyoming Range. In essence, the technique involves gathering hair samples from bears investigating a scented lure in a systematic grid system throughout the larger study area. These hairs provide a DNA sample from individual bears and a “mark-recapture” technique is used to estimate the density of bears in the given area. It also entails several hundred miles of hiking each week in order to cover the gridded area while working in some of the most beautiful and rugged terrain Wyoming has to offer. The results gathered from these monitoring efforts will be used to evaluate current and future management strategies for black bears in this area, with the goal of expanding the technique to better understand and manage black bear populations throughout the state .



Here's how it works: Bears are very driven by scent; the bear comes in to investigate the smell and snags a small tuft of hair on the barbed wire while doing so, thereby leaving a tasty morsel of DNA for extraction from that hair without actually having to capture the bear.



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Curlews Head South

Interestingly, just as we're heading into the peak of the summer in northwest Wyoming, long-billed curlews are already heading south towards their wintering areas, which we've found to be in Mexico. Currently, only two of the eight Wyoming satellite-tagged birds remain in the state. One in the Jackson area and one near Daniel.

The only Jackson bird, AJ is starting her third documented migration south and is now in the Provo, Utah area. She migrated about two weeks later this year, leaving Jackson July 9-10 (compared to late June in 2014 and 2015). This year she and her marked male re-nested two times before successfully hatching a brood. Her male remains with the brood.



Of the three birds marked in the Daniel area, one (JC) appears to have gone down for unknown reasons on July 8 near the Grand Canyon and is presumed to have died. Another, (KC) who migrated to the north end of the Gulf of California last fall, is now east of Guaymas, Sonora Mexico, which represents a significant and unexpected shift from last year. It will be interesting to see where she ends up for the winter. The other marked bird remains in the Daniel area likely tending a brood.

Putting Up Hay

For the fifth straight year, Jackson Habitat & Access crews have put up hay on the South Park and Horse Creek Wildlife Habitat Management Areas. Putting up one cutting of hay helps to defray some of the cost of supplemental feeding of elk in the winter-time. It also increases the quality of the standing grass when the elk arrive in early winter. The two units typically produce approximately 150 tons of hay valued at approximately \$25-30,000.





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Bald Eagle and Trumpeter Swan Numbers

Susan Patla, Nongame Jackson, completed a two day aerial survey in early June to document bald eagle productivity and trumpeter swan nest site occupancy in western Wyoming. Eagle productivity was robust with 56 nests

producing a total of 93 young including four nests with three siblings. Such large broods used to be a much rarer occurrence. A total of 16 trumpeter swan nest sites were occupied in the Snake River drainage (50% incubating). Twice as many occupied sites were found in the Green River expansion project area with 26 occupied in the upper Green River (65% incubating), and an additional six occupied/incubating sites at Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge. Increasing number and distribution of nesting swans in the state demonstrates how a long-term, concentrated management effort has helped to secure the future for this iconic Wyoming SGCN (species of greatest conservation need) bird.



Free Photography Workshop

Would you like to learn how to take better photographs of landscapes and wildlife? If so, join Wyoming Game and Fish Department photography intern Jessica Grant for a free photography workshop. The workshop will be held Wednesday August 10, from 2-4 p.m. at the Jackson Game and Fish office (420 N. Cache St.). Participants should bring a camera and RSVP to Jessica Grant at jessica.grant1@wyo.gov.



In the Thorofare

North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and his trusty dog Gus spent six days patrolling the Upper Yellowstone River/Thorofare area visiting with backcountry anglers. Many good contacts were made and overall compliance was good.



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Whiskey Mountain Camp Makeover

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has launched a campaign to raise money to renovate and preserve the Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp outside Dubois, Wyoming. The facility has been home to conservation education camps for youth, families and others for decades and is in need of repair to ensure it can be used for decades to come.

“The Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp has served as the center of conservation education for Game and Fish for many years. The camp is in desperate need of some substantial upgrades in order to use it for future conservation education,” said

Scott Talbott, director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

The Game and Fish Commission voted in January to fund \$2 million of the estimated \$4.5 million renovation costs. The Commission directed the Game and Fish to fundraise the remaining \$2.5 million. The fundraising team, led by Game and Fish Commissioner Richard Klouda, is working with the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Association in Dubois to work toward raising needed support.

“The goal of the upgrades is to maintain a location to serve anyone interested in conservation education,” said Jason Hunter, Game and Fish wildlife supervisor for the Lander Region.



The Department team responsible for planning the renovations, was guided by public input and a formal recommendation process. The planned renovations include replacing waterlines, upgrading electrical service and constructing group and cabin areas that are compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp is located within Whiskey Basin Wildlife Habitat Management Area, which is crucial winter range for bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer. In order to minimize disturbance and maintain habitat function, all major construction activities will occur during the summer outside of winter closure dates of Dec. 1 - May 15 .

“If everyone who sees the value in conservation education and investing in the future of wildlife contributes just \$1, we will exceed our goal in no time,” said Information and Education Specialist Rene Schell with Game and Fish.

The public can learn more on the [Game and Fish website](#) or by contacting Rene Schell, Brian Parker or Jason Hunter in Lander at [307-332-2688](tel:307-332-2688). Interested individuals can also support the camp by contributing to a [Kickstarter campaign](#), now underway for the first milestone of the donation process.

